

**Amendments to the Specification:**

On page 6, line 18, please insert the following paragraph:

FIG. 8 is a cross-sectional view of an exhalation valve **14** having a valve cover **50** disposed over the valve seat **26** in accordance with the present invention.

On page 14, please replace the paragraph that starts on line 33 with the word "Exhalation" and ends on page 15, line 25, with the word "reference." with the following amended paragraph:

Exhalation valve **14** can be provided with a valve cover to protect the flexible flap **24**, and to help prevent the passage of contaminants through the exhalation valve. In FIG. ~~[[6]]~~ 7, a valve cover **50** is shown which can be secured to exhalation valve **14** by a friction fit to wall **44**. Valve cover **50** also can be secured to the exhalation valve **14** by ultrasonic welding, an adhesive, or other suitable means. Valve cover **50** has an opening **52** for the passage of a fluid. Opening **52** preferably is at least the size of orifice **32**, and preferably is larger than orifice **32**. The opening **52** is placed, preferably, on the valve cover **50** directly in the path of fluid flow **36** so that eddy currents are minimized. In this regard, opening **52** is approximately parallel to the path traced by the free end **38** of flexible flap **24** during its opening and closing. As with the flexible flap **24**, the valve cover opening **52** preferably directs fluid flow downwards so as to prevent the fogging of a wearer's eyewear. All of the exhaled air can be directed downwards by providing the valve cover with fluid-impermeable side walls **54**. Opening **52** can have cross-members **56** to provide structural support and aesthetics to valve cover **50**. A set of ribs **58** can be provided on valve cover **50** for further structural support and aesthetics. As shown in FIG. 8, valve ~~[[Valve]]~~ cover **50** can have its interior fashioned such that there are female members ~~(not shown)~~ that mate with pins **41** of valve seat **14**. Valve cover **50** also can have a surface ~~(not shown)~~ 59 that holds flexible flap **24** against flap-retaining surface **40**. Valve cover **50** preferably has fluid impermeable ceiling **60** that increases in height in the direction of the flexible flap from the fixed end to the free end. The interior of the ceiling **60** can be provided with a ribbed or coarse pattern or a release surface to prevent the free end of the flexible flap from adhering to the ceiling **60** when moisture is present on the ceiling or the flexible flap. The valve cover design **50** is fully shown in U.S. Design Patent D347,298 Application 29/000,382. Another valve cover that also may be suitable for use on a face

mask of this invention is shown in Design Patent D347,299 Application 29/000,384. The disclosures of these applications are incorporated here by reference.